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ABSTRACT

Monroe Community College (MCC) has formalized 2 Plus 2 Cooperative Degree Programs with selected public and private colleges and universities to insure full transferability of associate degree coursework toward baccalaureate study. The program evolved after a marketing research study revealed that: public perceptions of MCC were mixed and somewhat distorted; an increasing number of MCC students desired to transfer; articulation agreements were too complex or too vague; and up-to-date advisement information regarding course selections and transfer was needed. The program has the following distinguishing characteristics: (1) students pay one application fee for both institutions and maintain one set of records; (2) concurrent acceptance to both institutions is based on MCC admission requirements; (3) students are guaranteed admission to a four-year college with full junior status; (4) degree and grade requirements are specifically defined; (5) comprehensive resource manuals and computerized degree audit sheets facilitate departmental advisement; (6) MCC notifies the four-year institutions of the academic progress of 2 Plus 2 students; and (7) agreements are updated annually. Program success is evidenced by increases in admission inquiries, applicants, and new registrants and in total number of agreements. (UCM)

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"2 Plus 2" Cooperative Degree Programs: A Step Beyond Articulation

by

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"2 Plus 2" Cooperative Degree Programs:

A Step Beyond Articulation

Introduction

Simplicity, flexibility, assurance, accuracy, quality and marketability must characterize transfer articulation agreements in the future. Two and four-year institutions must endeavor to eliminate transfer barriers that impede student progress.

Success for thousands of students pursuing their education into the 1990's is contingent upon assuring a smooth transition from an associate degree to a baccalaurate degree. Procedures need to be designed to simplify this transition. Intelligent student choice based upon accurate up-to-date information is critical.

Transfer cooperation between two-year and four-year colleges should be commonplace, yet the evidence suggests otherwise. Frequently, even the most comprehensive articulation agreements fail to serve students properly. These agreements are either so complex that students have difficulty interpreting the requirements, or the information is so fragmented and contradictory that the agreements are worthless in providing sound educational advice to students. This situation is further compounded by the fact that frequently this information is not readily accessible to students or advisors.

Diverse curricular requirements and variances in general education requirements at four-year colleges and universities further necessitate the need for accurate, understandable advisement information for transfer students.

I. Institutional Description

Monroe Community College, recognizing the critical importance of insuring full transferability of associate degree coursework toward baccalaureate study, has taken a step beyond traditional articulation agreements and has formalized 2 Plus 2 Cooperative Degree Programs with selected public and private colleges and universities.

Monroe Community College initiated the first Cooperative Degree Program of this nature between two and four-year colleges within New York State in 1985 which has become a model for other institutions statewide and nationally.

A distinguishing characteristic of the admissions/advisement/ transfer program is that students are automatically accepted into both the two and four-year college through one application process. thereby guaranteeing associate and baccalaureate study. Other characteristics of the agreement include one application fee. one set of records, & predesignated GPA requirements for certain programs. The agreements further guarantee the transferability of credit and the completion of the baccalaureate degree after four additional semesters.

II. Program Development

Monroe Community College developed a comprehensive marketing research study involving surveys, special focus groups, and strategic planning information in an effort to analyze the community and educational climate within Monroe County. The data revealed the following:

+ Perceptions by the community regarding the quality of education at MCC were mixed and somewhat distorted.
+ A projected decline in the number of high school graduates was anticipated.
+ Changes in economic conditions making the community college option more attractive were evolving.
+ Changes in the composition of the MCC student body were taking place.
+ An increasing number of two-year college students,(both career and transfer oriented), desired to transfer.
+ A distorted perception by the community of transferability of MCC credit existed.
+ Articulation agreements were either too complex or too vague to interpret.
+ Up to date, understandable advisement information regarding course selections and college transfer was needed.
+ An apparent "attitudinal" change on the part of four-year colleges toward transfer flexibility was occuring.

III. Goals and Objectives

As an outgrowth of this research, the "2 Plus 2" Cooperative Degree program evolved. Its purposes were:

+ To simplify the process of transferring from an associate degree program to a baccalaureate degree program.
+ To provide students with specific advisement information about transfer and degree requirements at sponsoring institutions.
+ To enhance course advisement of students by providing an opportunity for students to simultaneously meet MCC degree requirements and four-year college "core" requirements with optimal course selection and flexibility.
+ To guarantee transferability of credit and completion of baccalaureate degree requirements with four additional semesters of study.
+ To enhance the community's perception of the quality and transferability of courses offered at MCC.
+ To develop new student markets and enhance recruitment efforts of MCC and participating colleges.

IV. Program Description

Application Process:

+ One application fee and one set of academic records.
+ Concurrent acceptance to both institutions based upon MCC admission requirements.
+ Guaranteed admission to a four-year college with full junior status.
+ Specifically defined degree requirements.
+ Pre-designated GPA requirements for certain programs.

Advisement Assistance:

+ Departmental advisement of students enrolled in program via comprehensive Resource Manuals and computerized Degree Audit Sheets.
+ Routine correspondence between prospective four-year institutions and students enrolled at MCC.
+ Staff advisement support from four-year institutions while students are enrolled at two-year college.
+ Semester notification by MCC to four-year institutions of academic progress of 2 Plus 2 students.
+ Pre-advisement/registration of students upon transferring.
+ Annual updates of agreements.

V. Program Evaluation

The effectiveness as measured by graduates who have completed baccalaureate study will not be realized until the 1988-89 academic year; however, other indicators of program success are readily apparent.

+ Admission inquiries regarding the 2 Plus 2 Programs have increased dramatically.
+ 1986-87 Admissions figures indicated that "2 Plus 2" applicants composed 2.3 percent (108 applicants) of the total applicant pool; the 1987-88 Admissions figures increased to 7 percent (430 applicants).
+ After the first day of classes in 1987-88, there were 285 registrants compared to 64 registrants in 1986-87 ...a 445 percent increase. 1987-88 registrants represent 7.3 percent of the total new registrants compared to 1.77 percent in 1986-87.
+ The total number of agreements signed between Monroe Community College and four-year colleges have increased from the initial agreement in 1985 to eight agreements as of Fall 1987. (These agreements include four public and four private institutions). It is anticipated that at least one more agreement will be signed by Spring 1988.

+ As a "spinoff", those colleges involved in a "2 Plus 2" Cooperative Degree program with MCC have seen a significant increase in students attending their institution via traditional application procedures independent of the "2 Plus 2" program.
+ Faculty members are far more knowledgeable of degree requirements of four-year institutions thereby improving the accuracy of information and quality of advisement available to students. Over 50 Resource Manuals are available throughout the College and are updated annually.
+ Community perceptions of the quality of education offered at MCC and the transferability of credits have been significantly enhanced.

VI. Results/Outcomes

Student Impact:

+ Reduction of anxiety over admission to four-year college.
+ Students provided with a plan...a sense of security.
+ Guarantee of full transferability of credit.
+ Financial savings for students.
+ Accessibility to accurate and readily understandable course selection advisement information.
+ Improved advisement through optimal course selection.

+ Opportunity for students to track his/her career interest in pre-professional degree options while at two-year college.
+ Reducation of "Transfer Shock" syndrome.

Institutional Impact:

Two-Year College:

+ Expanded student markets.
+ Improved perception on quality of course work.
+ Increased community awareness of transferability of two-year college credit.
+ Increase in number of students desiring to transfer.
+ Alternative delivery system for advisement.

Four-Year College:

+ Students indicate intention to transfer at time of enrollment at two year college.
+ Simplification of transfer credit evaluation.
+ Initial cost savings making four-year college attendance accessible.
+ Improved dialogue between faculty of two and four year colleges.
+ Expanded marketing visibility.
+ Assurance that transfer students will be well prepared for subsequent study.
+ Offsets enrollment decline caused by attrition.

VII. Adaptation to Other Institutions

The "2 Plus 2" Cooperative Degree program model, when adopted in the appropriate context, provides an excellent vehicle for enhancing academic advisement as well as transfer articulation between two and four-year colleges.

Since its inception at MCC, the number of comprehensive agreements have increased to eight. The program is readily adaptable to other institutions. Several two and four-year institutions are presently using this model both within New York State and on a national scale.

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